



700.16 Citizens Observer Program

Number Series: 700 - Specialized Unit
Approved Date: February 28, 2019
Review Due Date: February 28, 2022

Sheriff's Approval: Digital
Review Frequency: 3 Years

POLICY

The Sheriff's Office encourages community interest and involvement in the law enforcement process and allows reputable citizens and student interns to ride as passenger observers in Sheriff's vehicles for legitimate civic or educational reasons.

PROCEDURE

A. Authorized Observers

1. Citizens requesting to ride, as observers in a Sheriff's Office vehicle shall submit a Ride-Along Form (700.16-01) and Release to the Sheriff. It shall be complete and contain the person's full name, date of birth, emergency contact, and the reason for wanting to ride.
2. Requests shall then be forwarded to the District Lieutenant for screening to ensure that they are based upon legitimate civic or educational reasons.
3. Citizens requesting to ride as observers shall be eighteen (18) years of age or older.
4. Citizens requesting to ride as observers shall have a valid driver's license.
5. After obtaining approval from the Sheriff or the Chief Deputy, the District Lieutenant, shall cause a criminal history check to be made of the person as well as a local arrest files and an FCIC/NCIC check. Requests by persons with criminal histories shall be evaluated by the appropriate District/Division Supervisor, and shall be denied where there is reason to believe that approval of the request would not be in the best interest of the public or the Sheriff's Office.
 - a. District Lieutenants, and/or their designee, shall make necessary arrangements for approved requests via contact with the person making the request.
 - b. District Lieutenants shall also reply back to the person via a response letter if their request has been disapproved. The reason(s) for disapproval shall be clearly stated in the letter.
 - c. Once approval is granted, the Telecommunications Supervisor will schedule the participant for the FCIC Security Awareness Training prior to the requested ride along date or immediately prior to the ride along.
6. Citizens may participate in the Citizen Observer Program once a year unless otherwise approved by the Sheriff or the Chief Deputy.

7. Sheriff's Office non-sworn personnel requesting to ride with a Deputy may do so by submitting an Inter-Office Memorandum through their chain of command to their Division Supervisor.
 - a. Civilian employees may ride with a Deputy once a month unless otherwise approved by the District Lieutenant.
 - b. Civilian employees shall abide by the same guidelines as outlined for citizens.

B. Approval

1. Persons must receive approval to ride in Sheriff's vehicles by the Chief Deputy, and/or their designee.
2. The Ride-Along Form shall specifically state the time period during which the observer will accompany Deputies. If an extension is requested by the individual it must be approved by the Chief Deputy.
3. The original form shall be forwarded to the Telecommunications Supervisor, who will retain a file in accordance with Florida Statutes pertaining to Record Retention.

C. Dress Code

1. Persons approved to ride, as observers shall dress in accordance with generally accepted business-like standards.
 - a. Casual clothing, such as mini-skirts, halter-tops, sundresses, shorts, T-shirts, polo shirts, or denim jeans shall not be worn. Closed toe shoes or boots must be worn; no flip flops, sandals or any type of casual footwear that does not cover the whole foot.
 - b. The Shift Supervisor or their designee shall make sure that the dress code is adhered to.

D. Citizen Request

1. The District Lieutenant should allow the citizen to ride in the area and shift requested if there are no specific safety concerns.
 - a. If a citizen requests to ride with a specific Deputy, the Deputy must be off probation and have satisfactory work performance.
 - b. If the citizen does not request to ride with a specific Deputy, the District Lieutenant should attempt to assign the citizen to a Field Training Officer (FTO) if available. If an FTO is unavailable, a Deputy who is off probation and displays good work performance may be assigned a citizen to ride with him/her.
 - c. A Deputy's family member who has been approved to ride as an observer shall be assigned to an unrelated Deputy unless otherwise approved by the Sheriff.

E. Citizen Actions

1. The actions of the observer shall be under the direction and supervision of the Deputy with whom the observer is riding.
 - a. Observers shall be prohibited from assisting in criminal interrogations, chasing fleeing subjects, or physical confrontations involving arrests.
 - b. Observers shall not exit the vehicle except upon specific instructions of the Deputy whom the observer is assigned to.
 - c. Under no circumstances shall an observer be authorized to carry any type of weapon, firearm, etc.

1. Unless an emergency situation exists, no observer shall use radio communications equipment or any other equipment of the Hendry County Sheriff's Office unless the situation dictates or has been previously approved.

DEFINITIONS

None

REFERENCES

State/Federal Regulations:

None

CFA:

None

Forms:

700.16-01 Ride-Along Form

Other Policy/ Procedure References:

None